

 [Print this article](#) | [Close this window](#)

Teenage girls more sexually active than a decade ago

Mark Metherell

October 6, 2010 - 11:07AM

Year 12 girls are more likely to have had sex than boys, and teenagers are likely to have had sex with more partners than a decade ago, a national survey has shown.

Advertisement

More than 61 per cent of year 12 girls said they had had sex, compared to 44 per cent of boys of that year, the study by LaTrobe University's faculty of health sciences researchers found.

In a trend the report links to heavier drinking by adolescents, the proportion of sexually active year 12 girls who reported having had sex with three or more partners in the previous year more than doubled to 27 per cent in the decade to 2008. Among boys, 38 per cent said they had had three or more sexual partners in the year.

The survey of 8800 year 10 and year 12 students in 300 schools around Australia was taken in three snapshots between 1997 and 2008.

The proportion of year 10 boys who had had sex rose slightly from 23 per cent to 27 per cent between 1997 and 2008, while for year 10 girls the rise was more significant, up from 16 per cent to 27 per cent.

In year 12, the number of boys who reported having had sex dipped slightly from 47 per cent in 1997 to 44 per cent in 2008, while the rate for girls rose from 48 per cent to 61 per cent.

The report, published in the latest *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, said the increased numbers of students having multiple sexual partners was significantly higher than that found in a large survey in the US and may be linked to heavier drinking among Australian teenagers.

"In Australia, rates of alcohol consumption among secondary students have increased markedly, as has the proportion of young people engaging in sex while under the influence of alcohol or drugs - these factors may be associated with the increases observed in sexual activity here," the report says.

The report said that given the increases in sexual activity and still moderate levels of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among young people, it was "of some concern" that the levels of safe sex practised by adolescents had not increased in Australia since 1997.

It was significant that year 10 students showed lower levels of knowledge about STIs than those in year 12, even though they had comparable rates of sexual partnerships to year 12 students.

You can follow Life and Style on Twitter [@Life and Style News](#)

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/lifematters/teenage-girls-more-sexually-active-than-a-decade-ago-20101005-1669s.html>